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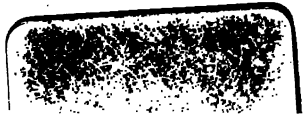
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"The great Court ladies declared that they would never dance on anything thicker than a smooth elastic spider's web."—p. 8.

THE

ISLAND OF THE RAINBOW.

A Fairy Tale.

AND

OTHER FANCIES.

BY

MRS. NEWTON CROSLAND,

AUTHOR OF "MRS. BLAKE," "HILDRED THE DAUGHTER," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED.

"Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends."
A Midsummer Night's Dream.

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TO

THE CHILDREN OF

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THE ISLAND OF THE RAINBOW.

CHAPTER I.

How the Fairyland's End was broken off.

"We shall have shortly discord in the spheres."
SHAKESPEARE—*As You Like It.*



ONCE upon a time, a strange and sudden accident happened in Fairyland. A piece of the solid mainland was broken sharp off, and sailed away for I cannot tell you how *long a time*, till it came to the confines of

our part of the world, when it settled down as an island just where the rainbow dips into the sea.

Fairyland was ruled over by Oberon and Titania then, just as it is now. Of course you know all about that Fairy King and Queen, and how they had a quarrel once, which, as quarrels generally do, caused all sorts of mischief. However, they were young and inexperienced at that time, and I suppose hot tempered; but, at any rate, they soon "made it up," and their reconciliation was a very pretty affair. No doubt they have lived quite happily ever since, or some mischief-making sprite, loving gossip and evil speaking, would have been sure to bring us the tidings of another dispute.

But I must tell you the way in which the accident happened. Oberon had gone to the wars, leaving Titania Queen Regent in his *absence.* She had rather wished to retain,

to wait at the royal table, her old favourite servant, the Indian boy. But Oberon said No; now that he was grown to be a sturdy henchman, he was more useful than ever, and could not possibly be spared from the camp. She was quite at liberty to put Puck and Peas-blossom into royal liveries if she pleased, and let them wait behind her chair. So Titania made the best of matters, and arranged her diminished household the best way she could.

It was quite a new thing for Titania to find herself sole governor of the kingdom; and she soon discovered that to rule wisely was not a very easy matter. People who had not the least right to interfere in state affairs took advantage of Oberon's absence to suggest all sorts of ridiculous plans; and the Queen had to engage three extra secretaries to answer all the silly letters she received.

Now, *there* was a little knot of vain foolish

people who were dreadfully jealous and envious of the great appointments of State; some of them giddy and young, but others were really old enough to have known better. It was easy for a pack of rosy-cheeked merry people to laugh at sleepy-eyed old Lord Silvershine, but they could not slide on a moonbeam as he did at the rate of a thousand miles a second, and be here, and there, and everywhere in less than no time. For he had to journey half over the globe, touching with his little invisible wand of office the eyelids of all the people who had tired themselves with hard work, and so sending them fast asleep in a moment. If he had chattered and laughed and made jokes, like the people who quizzed him, that would have been the way to keep the tired folks wide awake.

It was mighty easy also to call the Duke Feather-of-light proud and ostentatious, be*cause he never drove* out with less than eight

winged horses richly caparisoned to draw his state carriage. But although it is true that his coachman did once run over a flash of lightning from careless driving, I believe Matter-of-fact, one of the chief grumblers, would have liked to have been in the carriage at the very moment, to know what sort of a jerk there was, and to explain with hard words and long sentences the scientific phenomena produced by wheels passing over the "electric fluid," as he would have been sure to call it.

Now, the Duke was one of the busiest noblemen in the whole kingdom; and his mind was so much occupied that he had not noticed how fast his horses were going; but when he saw what had happened, of course he rebuked his coachman, observing it was a good thing nobody chanced to be riding on the lightning, and begging him to look where he was driving in future. For the Duke was *very humane,* and besides, he had no time to

spare for accidents of that description. Cloudy days and cold winds were sufficient hindrances to his travelling, and the winged horses had generally to go at full speed to make up for lost time.

It would have been a dreadful thing if the Duke had been behind time, for he had to ripen the wheat, and beard the barley, and sweeten the grapes, and swell the apples, and soften the peaches, and harden the nuts, and redden the roses, and whiten the lilies, and polish the blades of grass, and paint all the flowers without ever making two alike.

Matter-of-fact had two cousins, Mule-head and Would-if-he-could. All three were born in the town of Daftnook, and belonged to the Slumberling family. It must be confessed that latterly the Slumberlings had made some noise in the world—a noise they themselves liked vastly; for, being somewhat deaf to *sweeter sounds,* they had revelled in the harsh

discords of axe, and hammer, and piston. In the old times the Slumberlings had intermarried with the Gnomes, and ever since then they had trod the earth heavily, as if they had a lump of clay fastened to the sole of each foot. Yet they had an immense deal of family pride, and talked still of their Gnome ancestry with evident satisfaction. They were so conceited and self-sufficient, that they forgot, what other people generally remembered, that the Gnomes were really an inferior race of Fairies, of bad manners and a low order of morals.

The three cousins had a slight smattering of knowledge, but it was all of things on the earth and under the earth; and, from their constant habit of looking downwards, their necks got so bent that they could hardly turn their heads up to look at the sky. They knew nothing of things above them; for they were so heavy themselves, that they could not slide *on moon*beams or even float on thistle-

down; and not breathing the higher air, like the more ethereal Fairies, they grew heavier and heavier, and were obliged to give up dancing at great assemblies, not daring to trust themselves on the spider's-web flooring of ball-rooms. Mule-head, indeed, proposed that ball-rooms should be floored with solid willow pith; but the great Court ladies cried, "No, no, no!" and declared that they would never dance on anything thicker than a smooth elastic spider's web, which was strong enough to bear a thousand Fairies at a time, if, indeed, they knew how to dance. It was quite clear, they added, that Mr. Mule-head and his friends knew nothing about the delights of spider-web flooring, the spring of which prevented all fatigue, and imparted an indescribable grace to every one's movements. And Titania being of the same opinion, Mule-head and his project became the laughingstock at Court.

But Matter-of-fact, Mule-head, and Would-

if-he-could had one pet scheme, which they had bound themselves by mutual promises if possible to carry out. They wanted to build underground cities, and tried to persuade everybody that even the metropolis of Fairy-land ought to be at least twenty fathoms below the surface of the ground.

Perhaps it was because they participated in the Gnome nature that they did not enjoy the sight of the blue sky, or the fantastically shaped clouds, or see any charm in the trees waving in the wind, and flecking the grass with their graceful shadows. They did not like the smell of flowers, and complained that the noise made by the singing birds—the nightingales in particular—hindered them from sleeping. Moreover, the humming of bees was particularly objectionable to them; and it must be owned that the bees, who have their likes and dislikes, had always shown their *aversion to the* Slumberling family, hardly

a member of which had escaped a sting some time or another in his life.

Well, for all these reasons, and perhaps some others, the cousins were determined to have their underground city; and they talked so long and talked so loud, and they looked so learned — you see, holding their heads bent gave them a grave look—that the Fairy world began to listen. And as soon as they obtained listeners, the torrent of talk grew still stronger, till it seemed to carry away common sense and wise opinion, just as the water from a broken sluice carries everything before it.

I have said that people listened; for though the Court Fairies, and the best families of all classes, ridiculed the idea of building mansions underground, there was a meaner order of Fairies, accustomed to poorer habitations, who believed there might be something in the new scheme.

Matter-of-fact made a great speech, in which

he reminded poor people that they could not eat roses, and that nightingales had not a feather fit for anybody's use. He dwelt so long on the delightful silence of underground cities, where bees and birds would certainly never come, that some of his auditors closed their eyes and nodded where they stood, as if at the mere anticipation of future slumbers; and they only thoroughly aroused themselves when they heard a description of streets paved with metals, and lighted with precious stones.

So the long and the short of it was, that a deputation went up to the Queen, to ask her consent to the experiment being made. Titania looked very grave and sorry. She did not like the idea at all; and, moreover, it reminded her of the most unhappy circumstance in her life, for she could not help thinking of Bottom the Weaver, and that he would have been just the sort of person to live in an *underground city*. However, she could not

refuse the request of so many of her subjects; and when she promised that a piece of land should be given for the purpose required, the triumph of Matter-of-fact, Mule-head, and Would-if-he-could seemed great indeed.

All that the Court party and the chief nobility could do, was to manage that the Underground City should not be near their parks and gardens; so finally a spot was fixed very near the Land's End.

It was a narrow straggling promontory, where people used to go on parties of pleasure, just to say they had stood on the extreme point of the country, and looked out on the wide ocean beyond — though they had to turn their backs on the beautiful fairy country before they could look at the water which stretched so far.

Now, it was the neck of this promontory that was given up for excavation. Being *little better* than waste land, no great value

was set upon it, though it was Crown property; and besides, people thought that in the future they should be able to make one excursion serve two purposes, and, whenever they went to stand on the Land's End, they could pay a visit to the Underground City.

So one Monday morning in the spring of the year the work began. I cannot tell you the number of fairy spades and pickaxes that were set in motion at a given signal. And as fairy tools work a hundred times faster than the implements of common mortals, you may imagine the discordant noise they made. Yet any Fairy who had bent her ear, and listened attentively, might have heard the feeble shrieks of the buttercups and daisies, as the sods of earth were turned upside down, and they knew, as fresh loads of earth fell over them, that they were going to be buried alive. Some cowslips that stood not far off began tolling their little bells, out of grief for

the sufferings of their dear companions, and in the hope that the sound of their bells would bring friends to the rescue. As for the wild primrose, it turned pale with fright, and has never got back its colour to this day.

Well, they went on digging, digging, but never coming to the right depth, where they could found the Underground City. They did not find any metals, or diamonds and rubies either, as they had been led to expect they should do, and which were indeed quite necessary for their purpose: though how jewels hung up on lamp-posts were to give light, without light being first shed on them, Mule-head and his friends had never declared. But they still went on digging, digging, getting lower and lower beneath the surface of the earth, far away from the green grass and sweet-smelling flowers, till at last the sky looked only like a blue patch high overhead.

And now, one day, suddenly there was a

terrible uproar. The workmen had come quite unexpectedly on the outposts of the great Gnome country, and the sentinels had given the alarm. The Gnomes being the rightful dwellers underground, it was very natural that they should resent a trespass on their territory. Besides, the Gnomes were a spiteful, selfish, miserly set of creatures, and hated the Fairies aboveground, were envious of their fairer complexions and more graceful manners, and spoke of them always as proud, conceited, upstart people. So you need not wonder that there was a dreadful fight. The unarmed workmen had no chance, but one of them, thinking to do a brave deed, seized a lighted torch, and threw it into one of the Gnome powder-magazines.

And now happened the strange event of which I told you. The explosion taking place just at the narrow isthmus, it separated for ever the Land's End from the main

continent of Fairyland, and off it sailed, a beautiful little island. Off it sailed, gracefully as a swan, or a stately ship just loosed from its moorings, but swiftly as an arrow from a bow.

Meanwhile the workmen were all tumbled into the sea: the Gnomes had time to shut their fortress gates, and fasten them tighter than ever; while poor Matter-of-fact groped about with extended arms, as if in the dark. His sight had never been good, but now the powder had got into his eyes, and he could not see at all. Mule-head had tumbled down with a crack on his skull, and Would-if-he-could declared that his arm was broken. So that is what they all three got for planning an underground city.

And now Titania's party, and the old nobility, and all the sensible Fairies in the land, put their heads together to repair the *mischief that* had been done. Being a merciful

nation, they sent Matter-of-fact to an asylum for the blind, where no doubt he has been taken care of to this day; for it is only when a blind man will not confess his misfortune that he is likely to do mischief: when he consents to be led, then every one must pity him.

Mule-head's cracked skull proving too thick to be mended, he was sent to a Hospital for Incurables. As for poor Would-if-he-could, he has been always obliged to carry his arm in a sling; and had he not had kind relations, I don't know what would have become of him.

But the most serious part of the accident was, that a party of Fairies were enjoying a picnic at the Land's End at the moment when it broke off and sailed away a beautiful little island. You may think it did not much signify to Fairies, who can make coaches out of pumpkins, and bestow seven-league boots on giants and ogres. Ah, but it did though. Fairies are subject to laws and regulations

just as strict as those which govern mortals, only they are of a different sort. Being out for a day's pleasure in their own country, they had not brought their wands of office with them, and so could not prove to strangers what great people they were.

Now the Sea Sprites, who had always been envious of the Land Fairies, were quite glad to see the little party in trouble, and their mocking laughter, as the island swept on among them, sounded almost like the howling of a tempest.

I must tell you the chief promoter of the picnic party had been a young Fay, Topaz by name. He was nephew to Mule-head, and had lately come into a large fortune by the death of a Gnome relation to whom he was heir. But, indeed, he had very little except his money to recommend him: he was not even handsome, for the Topazes are a plain family, unless they *get* rid of their yellow complexions, and are

turned pink by artificial means—being burnt nearly to death is the usual way, I believe. Well, he had set his mind upon giving a grand picnic, and had invited to it a young and beautiful Fairy, the Lady Clove Pink, who, after much persuasion, joined the party, and came under the care of her aunt, the Dowager Duchess Japonica; Lilybud, a particular friend of Clove Pink's; a young Fay, named Starbright, who had already distinguished himself at Oberon's Court, and about twenty other young Fays and Fairies of lesser note. A few servants to attend upon them were also there. So you see it was quite a little community that was turned adrift on the ocean.

Now, as host, and as the person who had brought them all into trouble, Topaz ought to have been the first to show courage and spirit and generosity, instead of which he proved the greatest coward you ever saw. When he heard the explosion, and witnessed

the crash, and felt the Land's End on which he was standing floating out far away from the continent of Fairyland, he thought only of himself, and began wringing his hands, and shouting and screaming in terror. Then he ran down to the edge of the raft-like bit of land, and held up his arms, and called out as loud as he could, "Help! help! a handsome reward for help, to take me back to the mainland."

But no help came, and so he began running along at the water's edge, till in about half an hour he found himself at the same spot, for in his terror he had run quite round the island. And they had been floating away at such a rate that by this time they were out of sight of the mainland.

Meanwhile the ladies of the party had behaved in a far more creditable manner. The Lady Clove Pink especially had shown *sense and* courage, and cheerfulness and dig-

nity ; and very soon every one recollected that she was a seventeenth cousin to the Queen Titania—seventeenth cousin, only three times removed ; and they felt that her royal bearing was therefore to be accounted for. Her dear young friend, Lilybud, also behaved with calm dignity and presence of mind, and quite set an example of fortitude and cheerfulness to the rest.

When Topaz found that he could no longer see the mainland, he sat down, and began crying, so it was quite evident that he was not going to prove a leader. Under these circumstances the Dowager Duchess Japonica, being the eldest, called together a sort of council of the remainder of the party, and reminding them of Clove Pink's relationship to the Queen, recommended every one to vow allegiance to her, and be guided by her commands.

" Fairies," said the Duchess, " Fairies without their wands of office are almost as help-

less as common mortals; therefore, above all things, they require a ruler and leader. Now, it seems to me that no one can be so fit to be our sovereign as the cousin of our Queen, namely, the Lady Clove Pink."

A murmuring sound was audible; on the whole it was an expression of applause, though no doubt there were some of the Fairies who thought themselves quite the equals of the pretty Clove Pink.

In a moment, however, a young Fay of high birth—it was Starbright—stepped forward, and, in a clear sonorous voice, he said:

"The Duchess speaks words of truth and wisdom. Let us vow allegiance to the Lady Clove Pink, and do her homage."

So saying, Starbright stooped on one knee, with the most graceful bend possible, while Clove Pink held out her little hand to be kissed, in quite a queenly manner.

The rest of the party followed the example

of Starbright, even Topaz, who wiped away his tears for a minute, and tried to stop sobbing. He had just enough shame left to feel that he cut but a poor figure; and besides, he was rather cunning, and he thought if Clove Pink was to be Queen, it would be a fine thing to stand high in her favour. He remembered she had always been civil and polite to him, and fancied it would not be very difficult to make himself a favourite. But somehow the danger of the hour, which had scared him out of his few wits, had certainly cleared her vision. When he approached to touch her hand, Clove Pink could not help an inward shrinking, as if it were a toad that was coming near.

When the act of homage was over, the first thing Clove Pink did was to ask her people to come forward without fear, to explain their wants and wishes, and to give her the benefit of their opinions, if they had any advice to offer.

Now, this was just the opportunity that Topaz had desired; and, without a moment's pause for reflection, up he started to make a speech. He was not clever enough to know that there are more sides than one to a grave question; his head was almost as empty as a bell, and one might liken his tongue to the clapper.

"I suppose," he exclaimed, "there is only one thing which we all wish, and that is, to get back to the mainland as soon as possible, either with or without this miserable bit of earth on which we stand. And my scheme is this, that we should offer to pay some of the sea monsters for carrying us on their backs."

There was a visible shudder throughout the assembly. Fairies accustomed to recline upon the wings of butterflies, and to be carried through the perfumed air of beautiful gardens, did not like the idea of riding on sea monsters. *Still, something* must be decided on, or when

the picnic provisions were all consumed they might run the risk of starvation.

It was Clove Pink herself who broke the silence, by declaring,

"I like not that advice. Speak, Starbright, and tell me what you would propose."

Now, Starbright had been leaning on the grass, gathering the wild flowers which lay near his hand, but gazing even while thus employed at the blue sky overhead.

"Gracious lady," he replied, starting to his feet, and making a respectful obeisance, "if I dare to advise, I do so with humility; but it seems to me that we have something to consider of much greater consequence than merely returning to a place of safety ourselves. To desert this strip of fairy earth—so rich in fairy richness—to leave it a prey to the Gnomes which dwell in its centre, or the Water Sprites which surround it, would be foul treason to Oberon and Titania. We

must stay on this precious soil, hold it, cultivate it, while a fairy breath remains in our bodies. See what a gracious soil it is," he continued, warming with emotion; "look at these lovely blossoms, which expand in my hand as I gaze. They are blue as the heavens above, and the touch of my fingers has twined them into a crown for our ruler's golden hair. Let us crown her—such coronation will confer power."

As he spoke he lifted the wreath to the white brow of Clove Pink. Then there was a murmur of applause, for a divine spark had been struck, and the Duchess whispered to Clove Pink:

"Choose Starbright for Prime Minister."

Clove Pink knew good advice from bad, so Starbright was made Prime Minister on the spot. He was decorated with the Order of the Amaranth; Lilybud, having stuck one of *these flowers* in her waistband before she left

home in the morning, had it ready for the occasion. And as amaranths never fade, it distinguished him from every one else, and answered every purpose of a star made of gold and jewels.

And now Clove Pink and Starbright set about the business of governing in right earnest. It was quite evident that the raft-like island was drifting away with incredible swiftness farther and farther from the main-land, and that the little party must make haste to help themselves. Accordingly, the first thing to manage was a division of labour, in order that every one might be set to work; and Starbright, being a good botanist, taught the rest to distinguish poisonous plants from those which were wholesome, so that very soon they were safe from starvation.

Every one went to work, and yet not all with their hands. The Dowager Japonica, for instance, who knew fairy life well, had enough

to do in giving younger people the benefit of her wisdom and experience, without soiling her fingers; and Lilybud had Art gifts, which rendered her such a joy, that all high-souled Fays and Fairies were delighted to toil for her, so that she might be free with her music and her painting, to remind them of the glories of their former condition.

Remember that, like the rest, Lilybud was without her wand, otherwise she could have compelled the air even to weave itself into a musical instrument for her to play on. As it was, she at first strung her harp with her own bright hair, all except the silver strings, and these she made from a little tress which the Dowager Duchess Japonica gladly gave her. But by and by other locks of hair were added, and the varied strings gave clearer notes and further octaves.

And the workers were many, though the songstress was one. For the wandless Fays

had to delve and sow, and fell trees and make bricks, just like common mortals; and glad enough they were to find a few of the workmen's tools, which, at the time of the explosion, had been tossed into the little island. And the Fairies had to keep at home in the little houses hastily built with branches of trees, and take care of some young children that were born, and to make garments as best they could. By splitting the least little thorn they could find lengthways, they made capital needles of various sizes, and they plaited the sort of down that lines many a seed-pod into a delicate fabric, and dyed it all sorts of colours with the juices of plants; and out of the feathers the birds dropped in their flight they made the most beautiful winter coats and cloaks you can imagine. And at night they were all so tired that they fell fast asleep, without needing any visits from old Lord Silvershine.

And from time to time Lilybud sang to them songs of memory and hope; and the songs were to them a more precious nourishment than the food they procured. And remembering that a Fairy hand had more than the power of a prism, she would dip her fingers in a sunbeam, and so separate and extract its colours, and therewith paint pictures of the well-remembered Fairyland, so that to none could their true home pass out of recollection. At other times she would take the sea sand, and shape it into forms of loveliness. True, the next tide washed such forms away, but the idea which had been shown forth was the "thing of beauty" that was indestructible.

So the general population of the little island had sense enough to know that it was right for them—and an honour also—to till the soil, and build the houses, and make the *clothes, and* leave Lilybud free to sing and

to paint, and Clove Pink and Starbright with leisure to govern, and the Dowager Japonica free to enjoy the quiet and repose due to wisdom and age.

As for Topaz, he had to do the hardest work of all, for he was fit for nothing else. But being endowed with great strength he was well able to toil, and so after all he was in his right place. But he did not think so. He was so conceited about his strength that he wanted to have high dignities conferred on him because of it. He was not content with the Order of the Horny Hand, which is a very honourable badge, and had been conferred on him as soon as he deserved it; and he was too stupid to understand that this decoration which did not please him was the only one to which he was entitled. He remained selfish, obstinate, discontented, and often idle, and gave Clove Pink a great deal of trouble one way or another.

CHAPTER II.

King Neptune and Queen Mab.

"We 'll bring your grace even to the edge o' the shore;
Then give you up to the mask'd Neptune, and
The gentlest winds of heaven."

SHAKESPEARE—*Pericles.*



FOR a long time the wandless Fairies went on digging and sawing, felling timber, and finding marble; so that in due time a beautiful little city arose, with corn-fields and gardens all round about it; and the island seemed after all a very tolerable place on

which to dwell. And now the workpeople had comparative rest; there was no longer need for them to toil so hard.

But though the labourers took rest, Clove Pink and Starbright worked harder than ever, for theirs was head-work, and they had to take care that the common people—with increased leisure on their hands—did not get into mischief. I should tell you that on the little island they were the stupid, ill-natured, and idle folks who were called the common people; and Topaz, though he had a fine estate on the continent of Fairyland, and heaps of money laid up in a fairy bank, was looked upon now as quite reduced to the humblest condition. It was only hard work that he could do; and when this was not wanted from him, or when from bad temper he would not work, the time hung heavy on his hands, and so he was perpetually getting into mischief of one sort or another.

He, and a few others resembling himself, did not care for Lilybud's music, and did not think her pictures of their old home in Fairy-land so beautiful after all. And one morning they all boldly declared that they heard distant singing, which they liked far better than any music which Lilybud gave them. Day after day they told the same story; and, indeed, more and more people seemed to listen and hear the strange warbling.

Certainly, it was remarkable that these listeners and hearers were all of the idle, good-for-nothing class; but they so persisted and insisted, that at last they declared they would build a boat, and sail out to sea in search of the unseen singers.

Now, if Clove Pink and Starbright had been selfish and cruel, they would have let them go, and felt glad to be rid of such a troublesome set of subjects. But they were *generous and* compassionate, and knew that

as rulers it was their duty to save these foolish people if possible from destruction; and so they called a council, and debated what should be done.

Suddenly it flashed upon the Dowager Japonica's experienced mind what the danger really was.

"It is the song of the Sirens," she exclaimed, "which these poor foolish creatures hear. Those cruel Sirens," she continued, "whose song is always being sung to lure listeners to misery. Let us warn them at once to turn a deaf ear, and themselves to play harp and cymbal, and sing the songs of our Fatherland, as the best way not to hear the strains of these Sirens."

So Starbright himself addressed Topaz and his followers, and explained to them that the Sirens were cruel monsters, who sang what seemed beautiful music, to lure people on to the rocks which surrounded their home; and

then he entreated all true Fays to listen to the pure singing of Lilybud, instead of hearkening to the Sirens.

But they only laughed at this advice, and said they were tired of Lilybud's songs, and tired of the island raft, though it was a piece of Fairyland, and as such perpetually revealing new beauty, and always ready to produce the wholesome necessaries of fairy life.

Starbright sighed, and Lilybud wept, although from time to time she dried her eyes, and sang her glorious songs of hope and memory; and the Dowager uttered words of wisdom with the calm dignity of age; and Clove Pink herself spoke persuasively, and, finding entreaties unavailing, at last, she as their ruler commanded them not to desert the island, on pain of her great displeasure. But their hearts were hardened, and it seemed as if entreaties and commands only made them *the* more headstrong. So they proceeded to

build a boat, and when it was ready for use they launched it, amid their own acclamations, declaring all the while that the music which so charmed them was louder and finer than ever.

And so they hoisted their little sails, and Topaz placed himself at the helm, while some of the party plied the oars with which the little barque was supplied. For when people are bent on following the beckoning finger or the wily call of the tempter, they generally take more means than one of hurrying to destruction. Thus doubly driven, the little vessel seemed to leap across the waves, as it swiftly dwindled to a speck on the horizon, and Clove Pink was left with only half her subjects, though, to be sure, they were the troublesome ones of whom she had got rid.

But Clove Pink and Starbright could not rejoice, pleasant as it seemed to be free from the annoyance of bad and disagreeable people

about them. They had compassion on Topaz and his companions, and could think of nothing else but how it would be possible to rescue them.

They even condescended to ask a favour of the Water Sprites, and begged the loan of a nautilus, that some one might follow the fugitives, and make a last appeal to them. But the Water Sprites were as spiteful as ever, declaring that a nautilus shell could not bear the weight of a Land Fairy; which was all nonsense, for Water Sprites, with their drenched locks and fin-like hands, are ever so much heavier than Land Fairies.

Clove Pink could not rest after the departure of Topaz and his companions, for thinking of the misery they would be sure to encounter; but at night she was so wearied that she fell into a heavy slumber which lasted for hours. And then it was that she had a very remarkable dream.

She thought she was once more at the Court of Titania, where Quean Mab — that little spiteful mischievous old Fairy—who, by the bye, must herself have put it into the heads of mortals that she was a Queen — was being formally tried for her many misdemeanours. The prisoner stood handcuffed between two jailers, each one armed with a wasp's sting, in case she should make any resistance. A fairy palace being also a court of justice, it was in the presence of the Queen Regent Titania that the trial took place.

I cannot tell you half the naughty things of which Mab was accused. Perhaps she was not quite so wicked as they made out, because when people once have set up a bad character for themselves, they are apt to be suspected of all the evil that is done in their neighbourhood. I don't think it was fully proved that she had turned the milk sour, or rotted the apples, or killed five little pigs by merely

looking at them. But she pleaded guilty to what it was no use denying — namely, the giving people bad dreams, which filled their minds with mischievous ideas, and led them to do evil things. And for all these her misdemeanours, the judge awarded her to receive ten lashes from her own famous whip, made of cricket bone and film.

At which severe sentence the old Quean set up a shrill cry, and joining her two little withered hands together, entreated Titania to have pity upon her, and not allow this dreadful punishment to take place.

"If your Majesty will but forgive me this once," she exclaimed, "I will never do mischief again. Oh, pray don't have me beaten with the cricket-bone whip, the very 'cree-cree' of which would make your Majesty shudder. It is true I have a power over dreams; but in future I will give your subjects good dreams, not bad. And I could—

yes, I could do one of your subjects a great service, by telling her a precious secret in a dream. But if once I am touched with the cricket-bone whip, my strength will all depart."

And now there was a great murmuring about the throne. Puck and Peas-blossom whispered something into the Queen's ear, while a "dainty" Sprite named Ariel pleaded by a gesture that Mab should be heard.

"Because the realm of night is lighted for me," continued the prisoner, "I know many things that are happening afar off. I have seen that your Majesty's cousin, the Lady Clove Pink, and her friends, are not lost as you suppose, and I can give her great help by means of a dream, if you will only forgive me this once, and not have me whipped as the judge has ordered."

"Ah! is Clove Pink still living?" exclaimed the Queen. "Oh! if you can be-

friend her, you shall be forgiven, and moreover rewarded."

"I can, your Majesty," replied Mab, drying her eyes with a gnat's wing, which she always used for a pocket-handkerchief. "I can; and as all waking communication is cut off, until you know where she is, in point of fact, it is only in her sleep that she can be helped and advised. In order that she might grow up humble-minded and modest, a secret of your royal race was not to be confided to her till she came of age—a secret which I must not blab in open court—but which if I tell her in a dream will help her in her present need."

Now, Titania was not quite sure what the secret was, so she motioned to the guards to stand back, and beckoned to Mab to advance to the foot of the throne; and then Mab whispered,

"She can command Neptune to help her,

if she sets about it properly, and I will show her in a dream how to summon him."

"How can I tell whether you will perform your promise?" sighed Titania, with a lingering suspicion in her tone.

"You can keep me prisoner till you discover the truth," said Mab, mournfully. "I am old and weary, and should not dislike a little rest. Only, if your Majesty has no objection, I should like a walnut shell to be fitted up for my prison: it has several little chambers, which would be convenient for the attendants."

"Very well," said Titania. "I take you at your word; only, that poor dear Clove Pink may fully believe the dream, I command you to pass before her sleeping eyes all the particulars of this trial and our compact."

"Must I show her the disgrace of my trial?" sighed Mab.

"Indeed you must," continued the Queen; "in order that she may have faith in your good offices. But if you are true and loyal, you shall be rewarded as well as forgiven, and meanwhile your prison shall be made as comfortable as circumstances permit, and you shall have a glow-worm every night for sentinel."

Now, all this scene was dreamed by Clove Pink, just as I have described it. And then there come a dense white cloud before her eyes, which obscured everything for a minute or two, but when the cloud was at its thickest, it gently opened in the middle, and showed Mab seated in the half of a walnut shell, and holding out a long scroll on which was written:

"Whereas, Fairies of the royal race whence Oberon and Titania descend have power over the Water Spirits, and after their twenty-first birthday can even command great Neptune

himself to do them service, you, Clove Pink, who are seventeenth cousin to Titania, being of age to-day, can now exercise your full rights and privileges. Think, therefore, how Neptune can best serve you, and boldly call him to your aid."

And then the cloud grew thick and white again, and the half walnut shell, with the shrivelled little Fairy sitting in the middle of it, was hidden from her sight; and Clove Pink wakened with a start, and found the light streaming into the room, and the fresh sea breeze fluttering the curtains at her open window. And Clove Pink rubbed her eyes, to make sure she was awake, and then perceived that she had been dreaming the most life-like dream she had ever had in her life!

The first thing Clove Pink did was to send for the Duchess Japonica, and tell her the dream. She thought, perhaps, the Duchess might know all about the wonderful power

that Fairies of the royal race had over Neptune and the Water Sprites; but the Dowager, though of very high rank at the fairy Court, was not of royal race, and really knew nothing at all of the subject. But she thought the dream so strange, and yet so like a Fairy's teaching, that she agreed with Clove Pink that there could be no harm in trying if she had the promised power; and when Starbright was called to the council, he advised that no time should be lost in testing the truth of the dream.

Now, no one had happened to know that this was Clove Pink's birthday; but as soon as the Dowager and Starbright learned the truth, they wished her many happy returns of the day, and proposed there should be a general holiday throughout all the island. However, they all agreed that the Court could not celebrate the day in a more becoming manner than by doing a good deed; and certainly it was a "good deed" to take measures, out of

love and charity, to rescue Topaz and his companions from misery or destruction, and lure them back again, taking all the risk of the future trouble such spirits would be likely to occasion.

But, as I have said, Starbright, the Prime Minister, and the wise old Dowager Japonica, approved of Clove Pink's resolve, and Lilybud declared that her endeavour, whether successful or not, would be a fit subject for the birthday ode she wished to sing. So Lilybud tuned her harp, and began playing and singing to the people, who gathered around her to listen.

Meanwhile, Clove Pink and her council stood on the edge of the sea shore, where the waves were coming up, as if to lay a pearly fringe at her feet. She wore a dress that was woven from fairy flax, and therefore was finer than anything you can imagine. On her head was the crown wherewith Starbright

had crowned her; and he himself, on a quite plain coat, wore his flower to designate that he belonged to the Order of the Amaranth.

Then after a few words of respectful greeting, Clove Pink stretched out her little hand, and beckoned, as if to some unseen power, and asked the King of the Sea to come at her call, because she was seventeenth cousin to Queen Titania, saying, in her pleasant musical voice:

> "Neptune, Neptune, stern and strong,
> Ocean rights to you belong.
> I 'm like you of royal race,
> Let us parley face to face.
> You can traverse ocean free,
> Therefore please to visit me."

Hardly were the words spoken, when there was a pleasant commotion all along the shore. In Neptune's realm there is a regular communication from every shore to the King's palace, which is situated in the midst of the ocean; and the little fishes all tossed and

tumbled about, in haste to get a sight of the King's messenger, as he started off on one of the royal chargers—which are always kept ready harnessed—to take Clove Pink's message. For the little fishes seemed just as anxious for a bit of fun, and an excuse for pleasure, as any boy or girl who rushes to the window when a gay cavalcade is passing. So they tossed and tumbled till they floundered into deep water, where no doubt they met a crowd of more important fishes; but all made way, of course, for the royal messenger, who wore a great pearl on his left fin, that every one might know who he was, and keep the high road clear.

Indeed, Neptune's messengers were officers of great importance, though latterly there had been rumours of an invention which was to supersede their services. It was said that certain earthly creatures, called Engineers and Electricians, were planning to lay copper wires

at the bottom of the sea, along which messages were to run; but all the powers of ocean were up in arms to resist the innovation, and the battle between them cannot be said to be quite finished yet. For the rocks still keep sharpening their edges to cut the wires, and the waves go on surging their weight of waters over the deep sea valleys, and the leviathans dash their mighty forms against the snake-like intruder, and at any rate there is no electric telegraph yet that reaches anything like so far as Neptune's palace, which, you must remember, is at the very bottom of the middle of the ocean.

Besides, it could not be properly laid down in that quarter without the help of the highest Fairies, who, as you see, command the Water Fairies, and they have not yet been brought to agree with the engineers and electricians. For the good little Fairy people are shocked at the idea of sending good news and bad at just

the same speed, and vastly prefer their own plan of travelling at a minute's notice from place to place on a magic carpet, and whispering what they please in people's ears, in a gentle, friendly way, instead of frightening them out of their wits with a double knock and a bit of yellow paper at all hours of the day or night.

However, Clove Pink and Starbright had scarcely had time to make some of these reflections when there were evident signs that the message had not been neglected. If the little fishes had tossed and tumbled only to get a peep at a King's messenger, don't you think there was a stir when it was known that the King himself was coming in state, to have an audience on the shore with the beautiful young Queen Clove Pink?

And King Neptune came with such a retinue, that the ocean, as far as the eye could reach, was lashed into motion, only not

angrily as when a storm is brewing. Indeed, the breeze was a mere zephyr, and the watery surface sparkled in the sunshine just as soap-bubbles do, reflecting the loveliest colours in the world. First came a regiment of flat fish, swimming on edge, wedge-like, to clear the way; then came some flying fish, who made a great show and splutter; and lastly, the King's body-guard of highly-trained dolphins, who surrounded his Majesty's car, and "bared their backs of gold," as they performed their military evolutions in the most effective manner.

Neptune's car was formed of a great shell, which gleamed like mother-of-pearl, and was drawn by six sea-horses. The clatter they made as they pawed the shingly beach, and drew the King to the edge of the shore, was something like distant thunder; and as they shook their manes, tangled with seaweed, the spray dashed far and wide, like a shower of bright beads.

Neptune looked very stately sitting in his car, with his greenish-white hair and his long beard, and holding his trident in his left hand to mark his dignity. Clinging about the wheels, which, by-the-bye, were made of white coral, were a few lovely little flowers, such as are never seen growing on earth, but which mariners sometimes bring up with their lead from the deep, deep sea. These flowers being entangled in the wheels, proved that the car must have come from the utmost depths of the ocean.

There could not have been a greater contrast between two "majesties" than between grim old Neptune and the pretty little airy Fairy, Clove Pink; but you see she belonged to a higher rank of immortals than the half-animal personages of the heathen mythologies, and this is why the Sea King was so respectful. If she had only had her wand, there is no knowing what she might have made him do.

But though Clove Pink was of superior race, she felt the deference that is always due from youth to age; so she made a graceful curtsey, and then she and Starbright moved close to the car, for she would not trouble Neptune to dismount, more especially as there was nothing on the island of size or substance the least suitable for a throne for him.

First she thanked him for having come so promptly to her call, and then she bade Starbright relate the story of their disasters. Starbright had the happy gift of being able to narrate facts clearly and briefly, without hesitation or troublesome repetitions, and Neptune was quite interested in the account of their adventures. It was such a long time since he had seen a Fairy, that there was the charm of novelty in all he now heard and beheld. But when Starbright at last explained that Clove Pink wanted his assistance to save Topaz and his companions from the destruc-

tion to which their disobedience was leading them, Neptune's surprise knew no bounds. In all his experience—which had lain chiefly among the heathen deities — he had never heard of such a thing as returning good for evil, and he laughed so loud a laugh that the rocks shook with the vibration, and the limpets were near falling off.

But just in proportion as Neptune laughed, did little airy Fairy Clove Pink look grave and resolved; and now she drew still nearer, and with great dignity and yet politeness she repeated the demand for assistance. In her own queenly manner, and in the clearest tones of her soft voice, she reminded him of her claim to his assistance, and told him that in the royal family to which she belonged, to return good for evil was always considered a princely attribute. As she spoke thus, her crown of fairy flowers — or else her sweet breath—emitted such a delicious odour, that

Neptune ceased even to smile, and leaned back in his car as if overpowered by some new and delightful sensation.

Then, after a minute in which to recover himself, he begged Clove Pink to ascend his car, and take the vacant seat at his side, in order that they might talk as became two powerful sovereigns. So Starbright helped her to mount the car, and King Neptune had the opportunity of perceiving that Starbright's amaranth decoration had likewise a wonderfully pleasant odour. Whereupon Neptune made room for the Prime Minister also, and a council of three was held.

"If you really mean what you say," exclaimed Neptune, "I can easily confound the Sirens. Pshaw! they are but feudal dependents of mine, and I should have stopped their tricks long ago if they had not sometimes amused me with their singing. But, madam, I would really much rather punish

this worthless Topaz than save him; and if you would only leave him to his fate, and let his bones strew the Sirens' shore, you would be rid of a great plague."

"But *I* want him saved," cried Clove Pink, in a tone of earnest entreaty; "I want him reformed. I want him to be shown the error he is under, and made to come back to this little fairy island, which, as a born Fay, he ought not to have deserted."

"If he comes back," said Neptune, "it will only be to plague you in some new and unexpected manner. Think again, if I had not better help to rid you of a pack of rascals, than save them from the Sirens."

"I cannot think again, if you mean think differently," replied Clove Pink, "because my duty is quite clear, and I cannot swerve from it." And as she spoke the perfume which had so affected Neptune stole over him again with renewed strength.

"I see — I yield," returned the Ocean King, "and I know what I will do. I will strike my trident deep into the foundations of the sea floor, and raise a ring-shaped island all around his boat. Topaz and his companions will find themselves sailing on a lake, and they shall be landed, whether they will or not, on a very different sort of shore from this. You leave it all to me, and the next time I pay my respects to your Majesty, I promise to bring you good news of your unruly subjects."

"But you must not really harm them," stipulated Clove Pink.

"No, no; but tease them, and punish them a little; just enough to make them good subjects for the future."

So saying, Neptune took Clove Pink's little hand in his, and raised it to his lips by way of a parting salutation, and his breath came upon her hand just like the gust of a salt sea

breeze. Then he planted his trident on the beach, to make it a sort of step by which Clove Pink could descend; and she and Starbright, being light and agile, were soon out of reach of the splash and spray, as the car moved away, preceded as before by the flat fish and the flying fish, and surrounded by the shoal of dolphins. Of course, all the idle little fishes, and the riff-raff of the sea, followed in a crowd, just as a mob on land follows any grand procession.

But no sooner was old Neptune fairly off than a most wonderful event happened. Clove Pink and Starbright were still standing on the shore, but looking up at the blue sky, rather than at the ocean, when suddenly something beautiful and glittering, more like a revolving wheel than anything else, appeared over their heads. The next moment it lay at their feet.

Yet it was not a wheel. Most people

would have seen only two sticks crossing one another which had fallen on the grass, and which, by the incredible rapidity with which they had moved through the air, had glittered and looked like a wheel. But Clove Pink and Starbright recognized them at once for fairy wands!

With greater delight than I can describe, they picked up the wands, handling them lovingly, as they examined them from end to end. Clove Pink and Starbright perceived at once that they were not their own old wands; and as they looked at them still more closely, they saw on each a winding inscription in small glittering letters, and written in the fairy language. On that of Clove Pink, she deciphered the following rhythmical lines, which, as she read, grew fainter and fainter, till, at the third reading, the characters faded away.

"For your own fairy need,
I was wrought
By the thought
Of the unselfish deed;
But was brought
To your feet
When the deed was complete."

On the wand of Starbright there shone—

"Because you decreed
That the unselfish deed
Was honest and true,
A wand is for you,
And the rulers are Two."

In both cases the fairy characters faded away at the third reading. But the memory of them never faded from the hearts of Clove Pink and Starbright.

Of course they soon began to test the power of their wands, and to find out what they could and what they could not achieve

by their means. Evidently they were meant for land service; for when Starbright, by his wand, changed a cocoa-nut shell into a very beautifully-shaped and fully-equipped little ship, a squirrel jumped into it before any of the Fay sailors could embark, and gnawed a hole in the keel; and when Clove Pink thought she would try what sort of a long-boat could be made out of a sweet-pea's cod, the touch of her wand only changed it into a luxurious couch, which Clove Pink took as a hint that she was to rest herself from further trouble about Topaz and his companions, and leave them to old Neptune's care for the present.

But when Clove Pink and Starbright used their wands for the purposes for which they were evidently intended, you may imagine the mighty changes that were brought about. Seeds burst into growth as rapidly as the famous Bean Stalk, and rich harvests were

gathered without waste, though the gleanings left for the poorer people were equal to what many farmers would consider a good harvest. Delicious fruits, all sound to the core, were stored without damage; the weavers' looms turned out beautiful fabrics, with all the colours and patterns harmonizing in true taste; and all the various forms of worldly prosperity were to be seen. But this would have been an unworthy use of the wands, if they had not been also employed for nobler purposes. Swiftly the fairy city grew into something grander than a city of palaces, though a city of palaces it soon became; for Clove Pink and her Prime Minister Starbright so worked upon the people by their good government and wise teaching, that the Law of Kindness was established throughout the island, instead of selfish instincts having sway.

And now Lilybud sang to a people who

delighted in her songs, for they had been made thankful and industrious, and day by day wiser and more sweet tempered, till, one by one, a great many of them found fairy wands, of more or less power, at their feet, and became themselves Examples.

CHAPTER III.

The Rainbow Steps.

"Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which, like a toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in its head."
SHAKESPEARE.—*As You Like It.*



WHEN Topaz and his companions left the little island, eagerly hoisting their sails, and rowing away with all their might, in such haste to quit the shore, they had not a doubt of their own wisdom, or a fear of what was to follow the step they had taken. Indeed, for a few

hours all seemed to go well with them. While the fresh bread lasted and all the delicacies they had managed to bring on board remained in abundance, the most selfish among the crew were satisfied. But when the rowers grew tired, and the best of the food was consumed, and a dark squally night came on, while the music which was to guide them seemed strangely to grow more distant, instead of appearing nearer; then they began quarrelling among themselves, and accusing one another of faults and mistakes, which, in reality, they had all committed pretty equally. Topaz still sat at the helm and guided the barque, as much as an ill-built vessel with an unruly crew could be guided. Whether any of them already wished themselves back on the fairy island I don't know, for as yet not one of them would own himself to be in the wrong.

At last the morning dawned—a cold dull

morning, with the sun hidden behind a thick cloud; but a red flush was spread all about the east, a sure sign of bad weather, folks say. And the waves looked muddy and dirty, and they heaved and tossed the boat about, so that the rowers could hardly keep their seats, and, indeed, the oars were almost dashed out of their hands. The chief sail split from top to bottom with a noise which the crew at first thought was thunder, and they had shipped so much sea water, that it was up to their ankles. Of course they were drenched from head to foot; and as all their baggage was soaked through, they had not a change of dry clothes.

You may fancy how glad they were when one of the party, with better sight than the rest, cried out "Land!" And so fast were they drifting to the shore, that others saw it in a few minutes. To be sure, no music came from the coast, and they felt pretty certain

that they were as far off as ever from the singers who had so delighted them. Moreover, the country seemed very uninviting. It was a low shelving shore, with little vegetation beyond a few stunted trees, and not a house to be seen; nevertheless, they were glad of any dry land under present circumstances.

As they approached nearer to the land, they perceived that it curved crescent-like, and they fancied they had unconsciously entered a bay or harbour of refuge; yet this could hardly be, for not a sail or craft of any sort was in sight, nor could they perceive any kind of landing-place. Wearily they rowed on and on along the curved shore, hoping every minute to find some spot of sloping beach on which to drive their little vessel. But the land only bent round and round, just as if it actually moved to hedge in the boat.

And so no doubt it did, for after three

hours' rowing they found that they had come to the very same spot of land as that which they had first observed. They knew it by three withered and leafless trees, which stretched out a few seemingly bare branches, that looked like finger-posts, only there was no inscription on them to tell travellers which way to go. And as Topaz and his companions gazed on the scene, they became aware that they had been sailing round the margin of a salt lake, instead of only following the curve of a bay.

But the question which puzzled them was, how they could have passed from the broad ocean into a lake. One of the crew, thinking himself very clever, declared they must have floated over a piece of land which had been covered at high water, and that now the tide had receded and left it bare; but they soon found out that it was now high tide, and a spring tide too, and still the land circled

them like a girdle, and a girdle that seemed growing closer every minute.

"Verily, it is bewitched land!" cried one of the crew; and in his sudden fright he dropped an oar into the water. For an instant it floated on the surface, but before it could be recovered, two dark skinny hands rose out of the water, clutched it fast, and pulled it down far out of reach. And as Topaz looked over the side of the boat—where it happened to be clear blue water just then—he saw that a multitude of little Water Imps had seized upon the oar for sport, and were playing at see-saw with it across the skeleton of a shark.

"Verily, it is bewitched water!" now cried another; and the more frightened they all became, the more desperately they quarrelled among themselves, blaming one another, and blaming Topaz for having been the leader and encourager of the expedition. Soon,

however, the water so bubbled and splashed and dashed, and the wind roared so furiously, that they could not hear their own voices, and all the while the girdle of earth approached their boat, so that soon it was so near that they could have thrown a stone to land in any direction.

And it seemed that just in proportion as the watery space narrowed, all the hideous sea monsters rose up to the surface, surrounding the boat with angry looks; then they dived away suddenly as if bent on mischief, and the next minute the water began to sink away in innumerable little whirlpools. Indeed, all was such commotion that the boat ceased to obey the rudder. Yet Topaz still held on by the tiller to keep himself from being dashed overboard, while the rest of the crew clutched at the mast and the bulwarks for the same purpose.

Finally, the lake narrowed to the size of a

duck-pond, when its foaming waters dashed the boat from side to side till it was a perfect wreck, and the drenched crew scrambled on shore the best way they could.

When all were landed the different little whirlpools suddenly merged into one, which sucked down all that remained of the boat, till it was entirely lost to sight. Then, as if the water had understanding, and its anger was over, it quickly grew still, and bright and clear as glass. And as the little party, panting from their exertions, gazed with a sort of wondering fright, the pond served as a faithful mirror, and they saw themselves as they were —a set of pale, shivering, half-starved, half-drowned, miserable creatures.

As the land had seemed to narrow itself all round the water, of course the three leafless trees were not far off; and when Topaz went close up to them he perceived they were not quite bare. Studded about the branches were

little brown berries, which first one and then another ventured to eat; and though they were sour and bitter to the taste, they were found sufficiently nourishing to appease the pangs of hunger. After many hours' search only one well of drinking water could they find, and that was brackish to the taste; but Topaz and his friends were all so thirsty that they were obliged to drink of it.

I cannot tell you whether it was eating the berries and drinking the water that so affected them, but very soon they found all their senses wonderfully sharpened. Their hearing grew so acute that they distinguished the faintest sound; their sight so piercing that they could distinguish every object to the farthest horizon; their smell so keen that they were ready to faint at the odours they distinguished; their touch so delicate that even the fairy garments they still wore seemed harsh and rough to their fingers; and their taste so re-

fined that the mere recollection of the berries and water was quite distressing to them. And the worst of it was, that their fine ears heard nothing but disagreeable noises, such as the croaking of frogs and the howling of wolves, the rattle of the rattle-snakes, the creaking of hinges, and grinding of saws, and, what is worse than all these, the shrill voices of people quarrelling. Their eyes saw nothing beautiful, but only fearful objects—blasted trees, and rocks rent as if by an earthquake, and wild animals, lean and ravenous, and cruel serpents with glittering eyes, that seemed gliding fast to their side. As for smells, why, the faint odour of Fairyland which still hung about them was quite overpowered by something as bad as garlick and sulphur and tallow and assafœtida all put together.

But as evening drew on, the sounds and sights and smells somewhat abated, and then, feeling dreadfully tired and ready to cry with

vexation, they began looking about to find shelter for the night. After much searching they discovered a great cave, and into this they gladly crept, and soon fell sound asleep. Now, the cave had only a south entrance, so they were sheltered from the keen north wind, which soon began to blow; but when they woke up in the morning they found the Frost Spirits had been at work, that great icicles were hanging about in every direction. Directly they left the cave in search of something for breakfast, they felt their fingers and toes nipped and pinched by the invisible Frost Sprites, and were glad to run fast in the hope of escaping from their tormentors.

But running only made them more hungry, and yet nothing could they find, save the bitter berries and the brackish water; and even the berries were encrusted with hoar frost, and they had to break the ice at the top before they could reach the water.

"I declare the berries are not quite so bitter as they were yesterday," exclaimed Topaz, after eating a handful of them; and then remembering that it was not for him, the leader of the expedition, to make light of their present hardships, he added, "at least, to my taste they are not quite so bad; and I really feel grateful that there is something to save you all from starvation."

Hardly had he spoken when he felt a glow of warmth through his whole body; and seeing that his companions looked at him with a sort of astonishment, which his words could scarcely have occasioned, he turned to look at himself in the mirror-like pond, near which they were plucking the berries, and which the Frost Spirits had left untouched. To his infinite surprise he saw that he was a better-looking Fay than ever he had been: of course he was yellow-complexioned still, but less like his Gnome relations, and absolutely he had a

little speck of pink colour on his cheeks. And as he looked at himself a great change came over him, and the more sorry he felt for having brought his friends into trouble, and the more thankful he felt that they had at least berries and water to save them from starvation, the more he was comforted by the warm glow, which set the Frost Sprites at defiance, and radiated all about him.

Day after day they had to eat the berries and drink the water; but, by and by, they discovered some trees which bore fruit a little pleasanter to the taste; and the curious thing was, that the more thankful they felt for their food the sweeter and riper the berries seemed. It was in vain to think of tilling the earth, for they had neither tools for the purpose nor seeds to sow. As for shelter, they thought themselves fortunate in their cave; and yet they soon grew weary of the idleness to which they were compelled, and began to wonder

how they ever could have repined at hard, wholesome work, on a bit of real fairy land, and with a bright sky shining overhead, and with birds singing, and bees buzzing, and flowers blooming all around them.

By degrees, indeed, feelings of true repentance crept into their hearts; and one day Topaz suddenly burst into tears, and exclaimed,

"My friends, we deserve our punishment; but I was the most to blame, because I taught you to be discontented and disobedient."

And then they all confessed their faults, and wept bitterly; and the more they wept, the more they became warmed and comforted; and when, soon after, they gathered their necessary meal, the berries were quite delicious to the taste.

For the first time since their misfortunes, they now raised a loud cry of thanksgiving, and its echoes had hardly died away when the sun broke from behind a cloud, and

quickly melted the icicles, while a pleasant sound, like that of an Æolian harp, broke upon their ears. It was a softer wind than had yet blown, which, rustling among the trees, produced strange music. And somehow the sound reminded them of Lilybud's singing; and first one, and then another, tried to recall little scraps of her beautiful songs; and though these recollections made them weep more than ever, the weeping comforted them in a strange and unexpected manner.

But new wonders awaited them. The next time they went to the edge of the little lake and looked at themselves in the glass-like magic water, they saw something more than their own improved appearance and happier faces.

Slowly there passed across the surface of the water, like real scenes reflected on it, those past events which had led to their

leaving the little fairy island; and then were presented to their view, in rapid succession, the chief circumstances which had occurred to Clove Pink and her subjects since the visit of Neptune to the fairy shore.

First they saw the little island, looking even more beautiful than they had known it, with crowds of happy Fays and Fairies doing homage to Clove Pink, seated on her throne, with Starbright and the Dowager beside her. Then they beheld a delighted crowd listening to Lilybud's singing, and though they could not hear the music, memory helped them to imagine how glorious it must be. They saw, too, that several of the listeners had fairy wands, by aid of which they worked their will in many an unexpected manner. But what astonished them most was to see that the island was no longer drifting before the wind, but had settled down, with the Rainbow touching its shore. And just before the

image faded away from the watery mirror, they perceived that, as if passing along a polished stairway, and coming to visit the island, a beautiful figure was traversing the rainbow!

But soon the water lost its mirror-like charm; for it suddenly grew clouded, reminding the beholders of its condition when their boat was engulfed. And yet the appearance was not quite the same; for though a soft wind stirred the surface into countless wavelets, each one was crested with light, looking, indeed, as if it rippled with flame; and though little whirlpools began to appear, they seemed struggling only with an upheaving motion, as they cast bright seaweed to the surface.

But the greatest wonder of all was now at hand. Gently and gracefully there rose to the surface the remains of their old boat, which had suffered a "sea change." Its

rents were all repaired with inlayings of beautiful shell-work; the broken rudder was made strong by a piece of bright red coral; new oars made of fish-bones, and of a vastly improved shape, were provided; and a sail, evidently woven of mermaids' hair, was ready to be hoisted, while cordage of similar material lay coiled in the boat ready for use. Though how the mermaids, who are so proud of their hair, and spend so much of their time combing it out before a looking-glass, were ever persuaded to cut off their locks, I cannot pretend to say. To be sure, it did not take much to make a fairy sail and fairy cordage; and as Neptune is a bit of a tyrant, perhaps he levied a tax of one tress from every mermaid in his dominions.

Three Water Spirits had lifted up the boat on their shoulders, and as they guided it to the edge of the shore, they just showed their laughing faces for a moment before

they vanished beneath the water. And now Eolus was seen hovering about in the air, and puffing out his cheeks as he blew a warm blast which dried everything in the boat from prow to stern. The same blast set the three trees vibrating, and the music which their string-like branches gave forth was so rythmical and so like singing, that it seemed to say—

"This your trial now is o'er,
For your safety—perilled sore—
Unseen powers have striven long.
Be ye for the future strong
To resist the evil thought
By the Sirens' music taught.
Leap into your boat!—Begone!
Safely it shall bear you on!"

Indeed it was high time they should leap into the boat: the water was extending its compass with wondrous rapidity, and the land opposite to where the little party stood

was sinking fast into the sea, as when a hoop is thrown into a pond, one side will go down first. In fact, they were scarcely seated safely in their little barque, with Topaz at the helm, when the ground on which they had so lately been standing began likewise to disappear, and even the three memorable trees—giving out, however, their music to the last—finally sank beneath the wave!

And so, once more, Topaz and his companions found themselves alone on the broad waters. But they remembered the vision they had seen of the rainbow touching the island, and looked up longingly for a sign in the sky by which they might be guided home. They were now vastly more anxious to return to the fairy island than ever they had been to leave it.

But it was not till night that the sign was given them. Down went the sun into the illuminated gates, which opened wide for his

setting; and then, in the opposite east, uprose the full moon, that "great pearl" which comes forth in so many different ways. For sometimes her beauty is veiled, and sometimes she shows but a glowing edge, as if it were the gilt setting of the darkened pearl. But to-night she was the great round "pearl," come up to light the world, and make everything the lovelier by her shining. How delighted Topaz was to see the moon's familiar face once more I need not tell you, for never once had she been visible through the clouds which had hung over the desert land.

And now, when the moon had mounted into the blue sky, she darted her soft beams across the sea, till they touched the opposite clouds, and then there appeared a lunar rainbow; and though it was faint of hue, Topaz took it for a sign, and he steered the boat in the direction of the coloured arch, which stretched towards the horizon; and behold,

a strong wind now caught the sail, and the boat seemed to fly before it.

When morning dawned, and the moon looked pale as she prepared for her daily bath in the sea, the sun uprose, coming out of his grey gates just opposite to the shining portals through which he had passed over-night. And now the fairy island was in sight, and Topaz and his companions were refreshed by the scent of its flowers and the murmur of its sounds, which floated to them on the breeze.

And the rowers rowed with heartier will than ever, and the magic oars with which they had been provided cleaved the water and lifted the boat forward so swiftly, that it out-chased the wind. While Topaz, with eyes fixed on the fairy island itself, no longer needed the rainbow to guide him.

Soon he perceived a little cozy nook, just fit for a landing-place, and thither he pointed

the prow of the boat; and in a few minutes the keel grated upon the shingly beech, and the little party leaped on shore.

Oh, how glad they were to stoop down and smell quite close the flowers which grew in abundance almost to the water's edge, and which seemed more beautiful and sweeter scented than ever! And no wonder, when we consider the scene and the suffering from which they had all so lately been delivered. When, however, they began to look about them on the dear familiar little island, they were astonished at the improvements which they beheld in every direction. During their absence the vegetation had really become so luxuriant, that it reminded them of the never-forgotten fairy realms from which the little island had now so long been sundered. And thinking of old times, they began talking of the Underground City.

"What idiots they were who first thought

of such a thing!" exclaimed Topaz, whose opinions, whichever way they leaned, were usually very decided.

"Nay, my friend," returned one of his companions, "do not let us be the people to blame them. Were not we just as stupid to leave this little island, to follow that strange singing, which, upon my word, I now think was only a croaking and screeching?"

But at this opinion some of the rest demurred, and Topaz observed,

"No, no; it was pleasant singing enough in the distance: neither Sirens nor any other tempters croak and screech when they want to lead us into mischief."

By this time they had walked a little distance inland, and were rather surprised at not having yet met any of their old acquaintances. Now, the truth was, they had landed on the least populous part of the coast; besides which, there were such grand doings that day

on the other side of the island, near Clove Pink's palace, that almost all her subjects had rushed thither to see the sight.

Not only was Neptune paying his promised visit to Clove Pink, and reporting the safe return of Topaz and his party, but Clove Pink was entertaining a visitor who had travelled on the rainbow, and who was an object of interest to every one on the island. This was Ariel, an old acquaintance of the Sea King, whom he was delighted to see.

Neptune's second visit was made, if possible, with greater state than the first. But I need not describe over again his shining car, or the sea-horses, flat fish, flying fish, and dolphins. It is true that Clove Pink, by reason of her lately-acquired wand, was able to offer him any sort of land accommodation, but Neptune begged to be excused from leaving his car, saying that he could not breathe freely away from the dash of the salt spray.

So Clove Pink waved her wand, and a little trellis of honeysuckle immediately formed itself on one side of Neptune's car, and by that flowery ladder she ascended, and seated herself as before by the Sea King's side. I cannot tell you what a happy meeting it was, though Clove Pink shed tears when she heard of the sufferings and punishment of Topaz and his companions; and although Neptune laughed when he was describing the bitter berries and the brackish water, her tender heart was full of compassion for their misery. However, all regrets were changed to joy when she heard how thoroughly repentant they were, and that they were even now safely landed on the fairy island.

Then it was explained to Neptune that Ariel had come to them along the rainbow, to show them the way back to their first dear home in fairy realms.

"And I suppose you mean to go?" said

Neptune, with a sigh that set all the waves near the car heaving: "I suppose you mean to go, and I dare say I shall never see you any more."

"I don't mean to go just yet," replied Clove Pink. "I must not go till I have done all I can for the fairy island. I must not go till my gracious cousin, Titania, bids me return, and that will certainly not be till Topaz and his companions can go back also."

"They don't deserve so much consideration," observed Neptune.

"Half-forgiveness is no forgiveness at all," said Clove Pink, gently, and with a little sigh that made the honeysuckles tremble and shed out their scent. "It was Ariel's kind heart," she continued, "that made him come here in search of us, and show us the way home; and he has promised to go back, and plead the cause of Topaz and his companions, and receive orders about all of us."

"Ah!" cried Neptune, "if I rememb rightly, Ariel suffered himself in his youtl and now that he has long enjoyed his free dom, I suppose he still recollects his bondage, and the torments he endured from Sycorax and Caliban, and so has a fellow-feeling for people in trouble. But he was always a good-natured little fellow, and just the one to glide upon rainbows, as well as ride on a bat. But I don't see the rainbow: where is it?"

"I don't see it very clearly myself just now," replied Clove Pink, "but I know it is there—just there," she added, stretching out her hand, as if to indicate the spot. "Yes, I am so very sure it is there, that I should not be the least afraid of mounting it, though I could not see the steps. Indeed, Ariel says that those who plant their feet firmly, even though the steps are unseen, are sure to walk quite safely."

"You airy Fairy creatures are very wonder-

ful beings," said Neptune, with respect; "for my own part, I should tremble at trusting myself to anything but the salt sea water: to be sure, a stairway that would support you and all your subjects would break down under my weight."

"Suppose you were to try some day," suggested Clove Pink: "my belief is, that the rainbow steps would bear any weight."

But just at this moment Ariel, who had been missed for some little time, appeared as a pleasant surprise, and swung himself into the car, from

"Under the blossom which hangs on the bough."

Now, Ariel wanted to ask Neptune a number of questions. The "tricksy spirit," among other things, would have liked to know what had become of the great book which his master and friend, Prospero, drowned,

"Deeper than did ever plummet sound."

But Neptune had only a faint recollection of the circumstance. He had so many treasures locked up "deeper than did ever plummet sound," that a queer old book, which none of the Water Spirits could read, was not likely to be thought of much account.

And now it was time for Neptune to say farewell, and I believe his leave-taking would have been quite pathetic had not Clove Pink assured him that she should never forget his kindness, and that she confidently hoped some day to see him again. By this time the sea-horses were pawing the beach, and the flat fish had got up from the bottom of the water, and were setting themselves edgeways to clear the way, and the flying fish and the dolphins were making ready for their part in the procession, and the little fish were all scrambling about and making a great splutter, each one trying to get a good place to see the King as he passed along.

It was after the car had disappeared under the water that Topaz and his little party came up—just too late to see the fine sight which had delighted so many people.

And now their hearts went pit-a-pat at the idea of meeting Clove Pink and all their old friends; and no wonder that they felt a little shamefaced. But Clove Pink had said that her forgiveness was complete, and so she proved it. She smiled when Topaz approached the spot where she and her Court were assembled, and even moved forward a few steps to meet him—a great deal, you know, for a Queen to do. Then when the little party begged leave to do homage, she held out her hand to be kissed. And really they were all so improved in appearance that she could not help complimenting them on the change.

Clove Pink did not utter a word of reproach for their past faults, but listened to the account they gave of their adventures

with the greatest sympathy and interest. Of course this behaviour only made them wonder more and more how they ever could have disobeyed such a kind sovereign. And the more Topaz repented of his wrong-doing, the more he lost his yellow complexion, and became fair and rosy-looking, like the high-class Fairies.

And now you will say there was no reason why they should not follow Ariel's advice, and, tripping along the rainbow path, return without further delay to the continent of Fairyland, the dominions of King Oberon and Queen Titania. But the rainbow was only visible afar off, and it was not every one who could all at once find the unseen steps, or walk quite steadily on them at first.

Ariel came backwards and forwards several times with kind messages of encouragement from Oberon and Titania; travelling on a bat's back himself to save time, although

always ready to show how strong and sure were the rainbow steps by which others must travel. However, at last they all succeeded, Clove Pink and her Court being the last to quit the little island; for just as a good captain is the last to quit his ship, so Clove Pink as ruler would not desert any of her subjects, though she herself was the first who knew how to find the unseen steps.

I should tell you that Oberon had now been some time returned from the wars, and having gained a great victory, was in high spirits, and not inclined to scold anybody for slight offences. Poor dear Titania, who loved him very much, was also a little bit afraid of him, and had rather quaked at the consequences of her having signed in his absence the royal assent for building the Underground City; but when she told him all about it, he only gave her a kiss, and said, "Never mind; we'll make it all right." And, perhaps—

for who knows?—he sent Ariel, who is too "tricksy" a spirit to be left entirely to his own guidance, to seek the exiles.

It is impossible to describe the rejoicing which took place on their safe return. Mab was released from prison, on her promise never to give people bad dreams any more. The capital of Fairyland was illuminated in honour of the occasion, and a few old Fairies, who recollected Aladdin's palace, declared they had seen nothing so grand since they beheld that wonder.

But the first thing Oberon and Titania did was to load with honours the Duchess Japonica, whose counsel had been so precious; and Lilybud, whose singing and painting had served to keep the old glories of Fairyland in the minds of the less gifted Fairies. Yet the only reward they really prized was to be encouraged to exercise their powers. Thus is it ever with Wisdom and Art.

In due time, the Countess Clove Pink—a happy subject now, instead of an anxious Queen—was married to Starbright, and the wedding was the grandest that had ever been seen in Fairyland since the King and Queen themselves were married. Oberon gave the bride away, and Lilybud was bridesmaid, and Topaz had the honour of being invited to the wedding breakfast, at which he sat near the Duchess Japonica, and had a delightful chat with her.

The festivities were kept up so late, that old Lord Silvershine was quite behind time, and all the tired people had to keep awake half a minute later than usual; but he made amends by being a minute and a half before his time the next night, that they might make up their lost sleep. As for the Duke Feather-of-light, who was also present, he danced so much that he overslept himself the next morning, and had to be driven faster

than ever, though happily no accident happened.

Clove Pink and Starbright being asked what reward they would claim for their good government, only asked that, by a fairy spell, the little island, with its beautiful fruit and flowers, and lovely dwelling-places, should remain uninjured by time, just in the condition in which they had left it. So no doubt the island still rests just where the rainbow dips into the sea; and if we could but reach the unseen steps, we might pay it a visit very easily.

THE

LEGEND OF ST. CHRISTOPHER



A GREAT many hundred years ago, that is to say, some time in the fourth century, there lived a Canaanite of gigantic stature and of prodigious strength, whose name was Offero. Now, "fero" signifies, in the Greek and Latin tongues, "to bear." Offero, from his great size, seemed unfit for the common occupations of the ordinary people around him, and besides, he was fired with a certain ambition

to make his strength available for some noble purpose. Accordingly, he determined to seek the most powerful monarch in the world, and enlist in his service, feeling that he could not bow to any meaner master. After many a tedious journey Offero came to the dominions of a certain King, who was reported to be more wealthy and more powerful than any other on the earth, and this King the Giant offered to serve. The monarch, seeing his great size, and judging rightly that his strength was proportionate, was delighted at the proposal, and gave his new friend a place at Court immediately.

But this arrangement was not destined to last long, as you will see. One day, when Offero was in the presence of the King, there came a minstrel to sing and entertain the monarch; and in his story there was frequent mention made of Satan. Now, Offero observed that every time the name of man's

arch enemy occurred, the King crossed himself; and his curiosity being excited to know the reason of this gesture, he boldly asked why it was made. For a time the King did not answer, but at last Offero's importunity prevailed, and the monarch replied,

"I make that sign to preserve me from the power of Satan, lest he should overcome me and slay me."

"Oh! oh!" replied the Giant, "if thou fearest Satan, thou art not the most powerful prince in the world, and I have been deceived. I will seek this Satan that is greater than thou, and him will I serve."

So he set out, and, leaving the King's dominions, went in search of the more mighty master whom he had chosen, without, however, in the least understanding what sort of a power he represented. After a while, one day when crossing a great desert, Offero suddenly beheld a number of armed men, and at

their head a terrible being, who looked like a cruel and remorseless conqueror. This chieftain addressed the Giant, asking him whither he was journeying.

"I go," replied Offero, "to seek Satan, because he is the mightiest prince in the world, and no meaner person will I serve."

"I am he; search no farther," said the other, speaking, no doubt, in his most conciliatory tone. And Offero, thinking that he had now found a suitable master, made his obeisance, and joined Satan's followers.

Their journey was long and tedious, till at last they came to a place where four roads met, and where, by the wayside, a Cross was erected. When the Evil One looked upon this symbol of man's Redemption, he trembled violently, and every effort he made to pass the Cross was in vain, so that he was obliged to turn back and go a long way round, to avoid *it.* Offero was astonished at this proceeding,

and demanded why his new master behaved in such a manner.

For a long time Satan refused to answer, but Offero, who never allowed himself to be trifled with, threatened to quit the service he was in, unless his master cleared up the mystery. Thus constrained, the Fiend replied,

"Upon that Cross died JESUS CHRIST; and when I behold it I tremble, and must fly, for HIM I fear."

Offero was greatly perplexed, and he exclaimed,

"Then this JESUS whom thou fearest must be mightier than thou. I will leave thee, and HIM only will I serve."

And with these words, Offero took leave of the Devil, and once again set out on his travels. This time his search was longer; and Offero was growing weary, when one day he espied the cell of a holy Hermit; and, knocking at the door, he told his story, and entreated the

Hermit to direct him on his way. Then the Hermit, perceiving the ignorance of the Giant, began to instruct him, saying,

"This King whom thou seekest is indeed the Great King of Heaven and earth; and if thou wouldst serve Him truly, thou must conform to His will, and perform duties that may seem hard to thee."

"Let me know what these duties are," replied the Giant.

"Thou must fast often," returned the Monk.

"Nay, that will not suit me," exclaimed Offero; "for, if I fast, I shall lose my strength; and it is with all my strength that I wish to serve this mighty King."

"Then thou must pray," replied the Monk.

"I know nothing of praying," said the Giant, "and I am slow to learn. Is there nothing else I can do?"

Then the Hermit paused awhile, but at last he replied,

"There is one thing thou mightest do. Knowest thou yon great river, stony and dark and deep, and often swelled by the rains, and wherein many people perish who attempt to pass over?"

"I know it."

"Since, then," said the Hermit, "thou wilt not fast, and knowest not how to pray, go thou to that river, and employ thy strength to aid and save those who struggle with the stream, and those who are about to perish. Haply this service shall prove acceptable to the Holy King whom thou wouldst have for Master; and, seeing that thou art willing *to do what thou canst to please Him*, He may manifest himself to thee, and teach thee what else to do."

And now Offero replied joyfully,

"This I will do. It is a service that pleaseth me well."

So he did as the Hermit directed him. And

he dwelt by the side of the river; and he rooted up a palm tree out of a neighbouring forest, to be a staff to support him when he waded through the stream; for, so tall and stout was the kind-hearted Giant, that nothing smaller or weaker would have served him. And thus he passed his time in the work of benevolence that was allotted to him; supporting, with his strong arms, those travellers who in fording the river would otherwise have sunk, and carrying the weak ones upon his shoulders, dry, across the stream. And moreover, he had a pleasant word for every one; never seeming to weary of his task; but, day or night, doing all for love of his unseen Master.

So Offero pleased our blessed Lord, who looked down upon him out of heaven, and who said within Himself,

"Behold this strong man, who knoweth not yet the way to worship me, yet hath found the way to serve me."

Now, after Offero had spent many long days in this toil, one night that he was resting in the hut which he had built himself, of boughs, by the river side, a voice called to him from the shore. It was the plaintive voice of a child, and it seemed to say,

"Offero, come forth, and carry me over!"

And he arose and looked out, but seeing no one, he lay down again to rest; but the voice called to him a second and a third time, in the same words; and the third time he took his lantern and searched diligently, thinking it a piteous thing for a child to be wayfaring all alone in the dark night. And at length he discovered a little child sitting on the bank, who besought him, saying,

"Offero, carry me over this night."

And Offero lifted the child on to his broad shoulders, and, taking his palm-tree staff, entered the stream. And now the waters rose higher and higher, and the wind roared,

and the river broke into great waves, as if it had been the ocean, so that the hurricane was a mightier one than he had ever before beheld. Moreover, in proportion as the storm arose, the infant on his shoulder became heavier and heavier, so that Offero, who had often borne grown men in his arms as others did little children, felt himself tottering beneath his wondrous burthen. Nevertheless, taking courage, and putting out all his strength, and supporting himself as well as he could with his palm staff, he at length reached the opposite shore. But when he had laid the little child down safely and gently, he looked at him with curious astonishment, and said,

"Who art thou, Child, that hath placed me in such peril? Had I carried the whole world on my shoulders, the burthen could not have been heavier!"

And the child replied,

"Wonder not, for thou hast not only borne the world, but Him who made the world, upon thy shoulders. Me wouldst thou serve in this thy work of charity; and behold, I have accepted thy service; and in testimony that I am thus well pleased, plant thou now thy dead staff in the ground, and it shall put forth leaves and fruit."

And Offero did as he was commanded, and behold, the dead staff immediately flourished, as if it were a living tree, and was covered with clusters of ripe dates; but even while this happened, the wonderful Child had vanished.

Then Offero fell on his face, and worshipped CHRIST with fervour and sincerity; for from this moment he was a regenerate man, and knew and understood the mighty power of devotion; that power which ever brings down on the believer strength to do and to endure, as if on the airy ladder of prayer a host of

angels descended to guard and guide the servant of God.

With his new knowledge came new duties to the Giant. He perceived that he had something more to do than to devote merely his bodily strength to the service of God. He must bring his mental powers forward in the one great cause. Accordingly he journeyed to Samos, a city of Syria, where he found many fellow Christians, who were being cruelly tortured and persecuted by the heathen population of the place. But the Giant greatly comforted and cheered them; and when the ruler of the city inquired who was the new comer, and what his name, the Giant answered,

"Formerly my name was Offero the Bearer, but now my name is Christopher, for I have borne Christ. He is my Master, the King over all other kings, the Lord whom I have long been seeking, and whom, having found, *I must* for ever serve."

Then the King of that country, whose name was Dagnus, ordered Christopher to be carried to prison, and used every means to tempt him to deny his Master, and to commit sin. But Christopher prayed for strength to resist evil persuasions, and he stood firm; had he yielded he would have fallen back into the power of his old enemy and master, the Devil. Again and again they tried to lure him to wickedness, but without avail; and indeed so sweetly did the graces of the Christian character shine in him, that some of the idolatrous people who had been sent to tempt Christopher to wickedness, were converted by him to Christianity, and fell down and worshipped Christ.

Then Dagnus the tyrant, finding it impossible to subdue the Saint to his will, ordered him to be scourged and tortured, and afterwards beheaded. When Christopher heard his sentence, he neither trembled nor feared,

but his countenance lighted up with a glow of joy, as he said,

"I will strive *to do what I can* to serve my glorious Master. How graciously has He accepted my services, and permitted them to increase! First He allowed me to help His people, by saving them from bodily danger in fording the great river; then He taught me how to preach in His name, and bring to Him those sinners who were sent to tempt me to wickedness; and showed me that one soul was of greater worth than a universe of mortal frames. Surely it was His guiding hand that led me to leave the great river; and now He grants me leave to suffer death for His sake, and prove by my constancy that the God I serve is not like the gods of the heathen, made of stocks and stones, but the great God who can save my soul alive, when this human body is destroyed."

And so they led him away to torture and

to death. And just before he was beheaded, Christopher knelt down, and though he was still smarting from the cruel blows he had received, his heart was full of compassion and forgiveness for his tormentors; and as he knelt, he prayed that those who looked upon him, trusting in God the Redeemer, should not suffer from tempest, earthquake, or fire.

And the angels, whom God had sent down to him while he prayed, carried up his soul to Heaven, there for ever to find that because he had believed in Christ, and had always sought *to do what he could* to please Him, he should have joyful service for ever and ever, with angels and just men made perfect for his companions, in a land where sorrow is unknown.

Think what a world even this would be, if there were not one selfish, or cruel, or unkind person in it; and then dream, if you dimly can, of the rapture of Heaven, where all is

love, and joy, and wisdom, and beauty, and order! But we may be sure that all our dreams are far, far from the truth; for hath it not been said, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him?"

Now, Christopher's meekness and charity had a great effect upon the heathen multitude who witnessed his death, and many were converted thereby to Christianity. Then a silly saying went about, that those who even looked at a picture of Saint Christopher, would be exempt for that day from all perils of earthquake, fire, and flood; and his image, the type of strength, was thought to invigorate those who had to struggle with the evils of life, or were exhausted by the labours of husbandry. Thus, you see, a gross superstition arose, which would have shocked St. *Christopher* himself, had he contemplated such

an abuse of his dying prayer, and the number of images and pictures of him which were subsequently treated with an almost idolatrous worship.

And now I will tell my young friends how they may be sure to know a picture of St. Christopher if they see one.

The Saint is always represented of a gigantic stature, standing in the water, which sometimes swells like a torrent around him, and at others only reaches to his ankles. He always has his palm staff in his hand, and, as it is often drawn a little like a club, he might be mistaken for the heathen Hercules, but for the unfailing attribute of the infant Christ upon his shoulders. Generally St. Christopher is represented as looking up with wonder at the Divine Child, who sometimes carries a cross, sometimes a globe—emblem of sovereignty—in his hand; the Saint appearing bowed by the miraculous weight he bears. Frequently

the good Hermit is represented holding out a torch or a lantern from the opposite side of the river, as if to light and lead the Saint across.

But whatever we may think about pictures of St. Christopher, it is very certain that it is good for all of us, with the mind's eye to contemplate closely and habitually the lives of good men: if we have hearts capable of improvement, we must benefit by the study, and grow by degrees more and more like that which we admire, and more and more safe from all the evils which beset the wicked. However, I will not tag a moral to the end of this legend, because I know that a moral is just the part of a story which readers—old and young — delight to skip, unless it is a moral that comes like a fragrance out of the story, and which they gather for themselves, as they would gather fruit and flowers from a garden.

WHAT THE WIND SAID TO THE CHILDREN.



IT was a wintry gusty day, although the month was but October, and the scene was a pleasant county in England. A bright fire blazed high, each pointed jet of flame seeming to shape and trim itself on the polished steel of the old-fashioned stove—

just as a laughing coquette looks from time to time in her mirror to smooth down her ringlets or braid back her hair. Three children were playing about the room, or watching the crackling and bouncing of some chestnuts they were roasting on the bars, while the eldest of the family, the darling and pet of all, poor suffering Alice, lay stretched on the sofa. Their kind governess sat near, joining sometimes in their pleasant talk, as she diligently continued her netting, and ready to moderate any over-boisterous mirth which might fatigue her sick charge. Not that there was much chance of any such intervention being necessary, for little Alice had long been an invalid, fading slowly but surely away — like a lily which some rude shock had borne to the ground, and which was too fragile to lift up its head again; and Franky and Harry loved her too well to make her *head ache* with the rough noisy play in

which, nevertheless, on fit occasions they delighted. Lizzy of course was gentle, as all girls are. I don't believe in the existence of those hoydens some writers describe — do you? I think they are an extinct race, like that ugly bird they called the dodo, which was last seen a hundred years or so ago.

But though Lizzy was gentle and docile, quite, in fact, a model of proper deportment in a little girl of six years old, it is not to be supposed that she was dull or morose; quite the contrary, I assure you. Lizzy liked fun and frolic, but liked them of that feminine sort which hurts nobody; and her natural cheerfulness was wholly unbroken, for she was a wee child, only just able to toddle from chair to chair, when her fond and gentle mother died, and did not feel the loss which had for a time darkened the young lives of her brothers and sister, and rendered Alice, now eleven years old, prematurely

thoughtful. Gentle children are often really the happiest and merriest: I am sure little Lizzy's quaint ways, and cheerful babbling talk, more often called a smile into the wan face of poor Alice than did anything else. You would have been amused one day to have seen Lizzy with her large wax doll. The doll had been extremely naughty, as you know dolls often are. It had been disobedient, idle, and untidy. Not only had it neglected to fold up its best frock, but it had not learned, as it was directed to do, the present tense of the verb "To be," and it persisted in turning in its toes, in opposition to the express commands of its "mamma."

Lizzy was almost in despair, not knowing what to do with such a rebellious child; however, she did not approve of harsh measures, so she set Miss Doll on her knee, and expostulated with her in the tenderest manner on *the impropriety* of her conduct. The doll

was obdurate in the extreme, not so much as drooping her eyes—which were moveable—in token of shame or repentance. Harry was present, and impatient at such conduct, and willing to instruct Lizzy in a sharper discipline than she had adopted, he boxed the ears of the doll so violently, that it tumbled off its mamma's lap, and falling on the hearth, received several severe contusions. With the blow to her darling, all Lizzy's anger evaporated. Henceforth she had only pity and caresses for it: all Dolly's naughtiness was forgotten; and though the fair forehead was scarred, the cheeks indented, and an arm dislocated, Lizzy with trembling lip and brimming eyes refused Harry's proffer of a larger, finer doll, as reparation for the injury his rough jest had occasioned. In the child's budding nature was to be traced the germ of the woman's heart.

Some one proposed that, as Lizzy clung to

her disfigured doll with such constant affection, she should hide its blemishes by dressing it in the old-fashioned style—with powder and paint, hoop and ruffles, and, above all, patches. For patches, as little pieces of sticking plaster placed upon the face or neck were called, might be so arranged as to hide poor Dolly's disfiguring cracks. Lizzy listened to these suggestions with great attention, and was much amused by the descriptions she heard of the absurdities into which fashion led people a hundred years ago—though indeed fashion has made us all do very foolish things much more recently. But I must tell you, that although it was very pretty play for Lizzy to dress her dear Dolly as a Court lady of the eighteenth century, she never would consent to hide its scars and scratches with the black plaster. Patches were indispensable for the costume, and patches accordingly Dolly wore; *but they* were always placed on the fairest,

clearest part of her waxen complexion. Dear young readers, if from these baby traits of little Lizzy you do not know her for a merry-natured, yet tender-hearted, and, above all, truth-loving child, I am afraid I have not time or space to make you better acquainted with her.

I have said that Lizzy and her brothers were playing about the room, while poor Alice, too weak to rise, lay on the sofa. From time to time a faint smile lighted up the sufferer's countenance, either as a happy thought crossed her mind, or she caught some sparkle of pleasure from the dear ones around her. But presently she turned her face towards the window, and as the twilight deepened, seemed lost in reverie. The governess had left the room; the chestnuts, the crackling of which had been the most perceptible sound, were by this time roasted and eaten, the fire had grown clear and quiet, the three children had

wearied of their play. Alternately the autumn wind moaned and blustered, as if seeking some crannies by which it might enter the cheerful house.

The boys leaned their cheeks against the cold glass of the window panes, and watched the clouds, as in hurry and tangle they sailed across the sky, as if gathering together for some strong muster, though between their racks the first few far-between stars of evening darted to their thrones. The tall trees bent their heads to the breeze, and scattered down their dying leaves in homage, though they shivered at their loss. Then the wind caught the fallen leaves, and whirling them round and round in swift eddies, as though despising its trophy, yet swept them finally into sheltered nooks and corners; and then passed on to ruffle the streams, so that no single star or cloud could know itself in its *former mirror.*

Lizzy had nestled her rosy cheek on her sister's pillow, and her rich brown curls mingled with the golden locks that helped to make Alice look like an angel already — an angel such as the old poet-painters loved to fancy and paint one.

"How silent we all are," exclaimed Harry, "listening to the noisy wind!"

"Is Alice listening to the wind?" asked Franky.

"Yes," answered Alice, in a sweet low voice. "Yes, and the wind seems talking to me. Tell me, brothers, what does it say to you?" And as she spoke she wreathed her arms fondly around little Lizzy.

The deepening shade, and the soughing wind itself, seemed to attune the hearts of the boys in some measure to their sister's fancy, and Harry was the first to answer.

"Yes," he exclaimed, "the wind talks if we do but listen. It is telling me of the

ocean where it rages and battles so fiercely, tearing the stout sails of the proud ships, as if they were but rotten rags; dashing oaken timbers to pieces against the immutable rocks, and singing a requiem for their burial to drown the death-cry of its victims. But I am to be a sailor, you know, and the wind says there is an old charter that makes us friends—that though it and its brethren growl and howl sometimes, they do not always conquer; and the wind promises I shall have a beautiful ship, that shall sail over calm seas, and have fair winds to swell, not rend, its white canvas. And my ship shall never boom out its iron thunder, except to crush tyranny and help the struggle for freedom. And the wind says I shall be a great man some day; and then I shall be asked to name my ship, and I shall call it the 'Alice;'—that is what the wind says to me, sisters."

And as Harry finished his harangue he

kissed the invalid's cheek, but it was too dark for him to see that her eyes had filled with tears.

"The wind," proceeded Frank, "the wind says to me that I shall be a prosperous merchant, trading with distant countries that the wind visits and tells tales about; and that money will be swept into heaps for me, just as the breeze, after seeming to scatter them, gathers up the fallen leaves. But the wind promises to whisper to me every evening at dusk that I must spend and give worthily, and try to be as good — as good as Alice. And now what does the wind say to darling Alice herself?"

There was a pause, but, after a minute or so, the low sweet voice of the invalid was heard.

"Brothers," Alice exclaimed, "the wind tells me the truth, and you must not weep to hear it. The wind has newly passed over

our mother's grave, and it tells me the flowers we planted there in summer are faded away to mortal sight — but their essence is busy loosening the mould to make ready for a little coffin that must be laid there soon. The violets round the grave will bloom thickly next year; but, brothers, you will gather them in memory of Alice as well as of mamma. We two—we two in Heaven—and yet among the violets! Now Lizzy," she continued, "Lizzy, darling pet, what has the wind said to you?"

Stifling sobs for a while impeded Lizzy's utterance, but she was a resolute child, and checked this noisy demonstration of her feelings; and twining her little fingers in those of Alice, she said firmly,

"The wind tells me I must be double sister to Harry and Frank, and double daughter to poor papa—and that Alice would like to *know this,* even before she is an angel!"

Something there was in these words that made the two bold boys shed tears, and the children all clustered together with fond embraces, and speaking childish sacred words of brotherly and sisterly love.

For many days the autumn wind soughed round and round the house, as if waiting to bear some treasure on its wings; but before the last leaves were rent from the trees, sweet Alice was borne to her mother's grave, and laid where in early spring the violets would surely bloom in rich abundance.

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